

# Measure Up

Winter 2008-09

Assessment news for twelfth-grade teachers



## Findings From the 2005 High School Transcript Study

- In 2005, graduates earned about three credits more than their 1990 counterparts, or took about 360 additional hours of instruction during their high school careers. (See graph to right.)
- In 2005, the overall grade point average was approximately a third of a letter grade higher than in 1990.
- Graduates whose highest mathematics course was geometry or below had average NAEP mathematics scores below the *Basic* achievement level. Graduates who took calculus had average NAEP scores at the *Proficient* level.

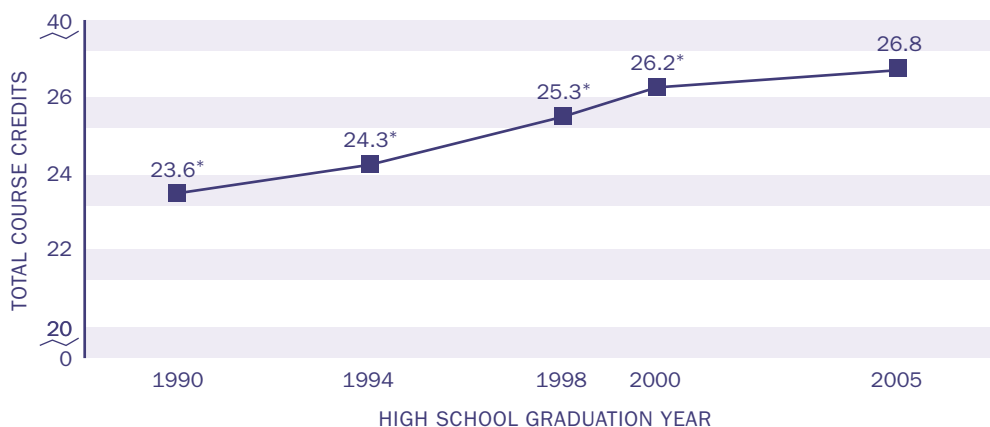
## NAEP High School Transcript Study

The NAEP High School Transcript Study (HSTS) is a periodic survey of transcripts of high school graduates, sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The study is designed to inform the public about the types of courses that graduates take during high school, how many credits they earn, and their grade point averages. This study also provides an opportunity to examine the relationship between course-taking patterns and educational achievement through the link to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) proficiency data.

In 2009 the HSTS will again be conducted. Additional transcript studies were conducted by NCES with longitudinal studies (i.e., High School and Beyond and the National

Education Longitudinal Study of 1988). As with the previous studies, no student or teacher time is involved. The graph below depicts the trend in total course credits earned.

Trend in Total Course Credits Earned, by Year



\* Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from 2005.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study (HSTS), various years, 1990-2005



To access additional information about NAEP results for twelfth-grade students, please visit [nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard](http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard).

## Motivating High School Seniors: Getting an Accurate Picture of Student Performance

When NAEP results are released in The Nation's Report Card, there is considerable discussion about the results in the media and among public policymakers. The general trend in NAEP results is strong improvement for fourth-graders and 9-year-olds, moderate improvement for eighth-graders and 13-year-olds, and stagnant results for twelfth-graders and 17-year-olds. Participation rates are high for fourth- and eighth-grade students, but have been lower than desirable for twelfth-grade students.

Both low participation and low motivation can undermine the validity and credibility of NAEP results for high school seniors. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which administers NAEP, and the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP, have been concerned about the participation of high school seniors in NAEP and their motivation to do their best.

To address this problem, NCES convened a Secondary School Principals' Working Group in the fall of 2005. After discussing the participation

rates, student motivation, and the results for twelfth-graders, the Principals' Working Group felt the results did not reflect what they believe is the true level of achievement in their high schools. The Principals' Working Group felt that high school principals and other school leaders could help solve the problem by obtaining teacher buy-in and motivating students to show up and do their best, and that best practices for achieving high participation should be shared with principals.

Since 2006, the *Best Practices for Improving Twelfth-Grade NAEP Participation* binder has been shared with high schools across the country. The Guide includes strategies for enhancing student participation and motivation on NAEP.

Student participation increased by 13 percentage points in 2007, from an all-time low of 66% in 2005 to 79%. This improvement was across the board—in all geographic regions, in large and small high schools, and among all demographic groups. Many schools implemented ideas from the *Best Practices Guide*.

## Exploring Motivation: Focus Groups With High School Seniors

During February and March 2008, focus groups were held nationwide with high school seniors. The purpose of convening the groups was to explore motivations and influences for high school seniors, especially as they concern participation and engagement in NAEP.

Focus group members were recruited to ensure a mix of various criteria including gender, ethnicity, post-high school plans, and academic ranking. Students were recruited from schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Below is a summary of the findings from the focus groups.

- ★ Students generally responded positively to the idea of NAEP and understood the need for strong participation and engagement.
- ★ Students were aware that states are compared to each other and that the United States is compared to other countries on educational progress.
- ★ Students thought that a better understanding of the test and knowledge about it before assessment day would improve participation and engagement. This information should include the subject areas to be assessed and the types of questions to be asked.
- ★ Most students indicated that if they participate, they would do their best.

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★ Students indicated that flexibility in scheduling the time of the assessment would be beneficial. Many students were concerned about making up missed work from classes.

★ Recognition of students who participated is a motivator for some students. Examples include a statement at graduation, a certificate, or community service hours.

★ Students in all groups indicated that providing food at the test site would encourage them to show up.

★ Students indicated that their motivation, in general, comes from within. Teachers and parents can provide positive feedback and recognition of a job well done.

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress High School Senior Motivation Focus Group Research. Topline Report. Maria Ivancin, lead researcher. April, 2008.



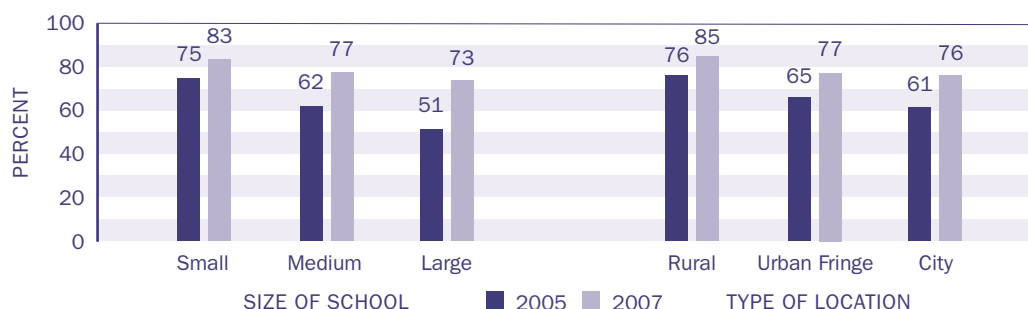
## Increasing Twelfth-Grade Student Participation: Successful Strategies

During the NAEP 2007 assessment, high schools used a variety of strategies in an effort to improve the participation and engagement of their high school seniors. Compared to the 2005

assessment, student participation rates increased in public schools. The graph below depicts that increases were seen in high schools, regardless of size or location.

Teachers can see the **Best Practices binder** or access the materials online by asking their **NAEP School Coordinator** for information.

Grade 12 Student Participation Rates for Public Schools, by Size of School and Type of Location



Four strategies emerged that were associated with a statistically significant difference in average student participation rates between schools that used the strategies and those that did not:

★ Holding a faculty meeting to explain NAEP and the importance of student participation and motivation;

★ Holding a meeting of seniors to explain NAEP and how important it is that all students selected participate and try hard;

★ Showing the NAEP student video of high school students talking about the importance of NAEP; and

★ Using school incentives to encourage student participation.

In general, the relationship between use of these strategies and average student participation rates held for small, medium, and large schools.

Small schools have fewer than 300 seniors. Medium schools have between 300 and 600 seniors. Large schools have more than 600 seniors.

## What is the Nation's Report Card™ ?

The Nation's Report Card™ informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

For over three decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By collecting and reporting information on student performance at the national, state and local levels, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students and their families is protected, and the identities of participating schools are not released.

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### If you want to...

### Visit...

<b>Learn</b> more about NAEP results	The Nation's Report Card at <a href="http://nationsreportcard.gov">http://nationsreportcard.gov</a>
<b>View</b> NAEP data for a particular state or contact your NAEP State Coordinator	The National Center for Education Statistics at <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states">http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states</a>
<b>Access</b> specific results for a grade level, subject, jurisdiction, and/or student groups	The NAEP Data Explorer at <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata">http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata</a>
<b>Find</b> information regarding the types of questions used on NAEP assessments or view subject-specific questions	The NAEP Questions Tool at <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls">http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls</a>
<b>Download</b> a Sample Questions Booklet that contains sample test questions for the upcoming and previous assessments	The National Center for Education Statistics at <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/booklets.asp">http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/booklets.asp</a>
<b>Learn</b> more about the High School Transcript Study	The National Center for Education Statistics at <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/hsts">http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/hsts</a>
<b>Offer</b> a comment or suggestion on NAEP	The National Center for Education Statistics mailbox at <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/contactus.asp">http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/contactus.asp</a>
<b>Watch</b> a video about best practices for 12th grade teachers to increase student participation on NAEP	The National Center for Education Statistics at <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/schools.asp">http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/schools.asp</a>